24:Meulen and Wissmann T-3 (1931)1932 MM2 Hadhramaut MM2

to this rich domain, lies at the edge of the plateau of coral stone. As one approaches from the coast one barely sees the gardens of palms; soon one finds oneself in front of a high, white wall, with a great, fortified gate, which, apparently, is kept closed even during the day. The traveller, as he waits, can only see, close to the wall and rising boldly up above it, the Sultan's massive palace which now serves as barracks for soldiers.

We were obliged to wait at a respectful distance from the menacing, fortified gateway until our letter of introduction had been taken to the palace, read and deemed satisfactory enough to admit us into the tobacco town. Ghēl Bā Wazīr, as a city, has not many beauties except for the large and ancient palace and a few mosques, and we were glad to accept the invitation of one of the authorities of the place to proceed at once to the gardens and to the Sultan's country-house in the cultivated district behind the town. We, therefore, drove without pausing through the place, which reeked of tobacco. The valley side of the town, that is the north side, has less defences than the south, whence start the great thoroughfares to Makalla and esh-Shiḥr. Nowadays motor lorries convey the bales of tobacco, which are two yards long, from el-Ghēl to Makalla. Manure for the tobacco fields is brought from the coast on camels.

A richly cultivated area begins immediately behind the town. The Sultan owns much tobacco-growing land, which is said to be a great source of income to him. Close behind the town are two gardens, in each of which is a newly-built summer residence. We enter the first garden with the smaller house which is set aside for the use of the male members of the household. In the other garden is a much larger building for the wives and their female attendants.

The gate is immediately shut behind us, our following of inquisitive youths remains outside, and we stand in the silence of the luxuriant garden, trying to accustom our eyes to the deep shade under the blossoming fruit-trees. It looks just as

351 if we had been transported bodily into a bit of the Indies. The fruit-trees best known in that country are represented here, and a sultry, moist heat permeates the shadows of this richly watered garden.

529 In front of the garden villa, built in a modern style, but not yet quite finished, is a cemented swimming-pool about 300 feet long and of the same width as the building. It joins onto the stairs of the terrace, and a trim rowing-boat lies motionless on the crystal clear water. To do us honour the basin has been filled by means of an engine-pump, and, although the water is warm, we show our appreciation at once by enjoying a bathe, and a row in the boat.

249 277 387 Our host, who is acting for the Sultan, is a tobacco-grower as well as an official. He says that the Ḥumūmī tobacco can only be grown here. They are trying to cultivate the same kind in Lahadj, behind Aden, and in the Yemen; as the climate and the soil are not similar the result is a product which in perfume and taste is inferior to that grown here. Cultivation in el-Ghēl is carried to a very high pitch of refinement. The tobacco-plants are manured three times: with guano, with fish, and with the dung of beasts and men. Pure water is used for irrigation, not too much and not too little. Each kind of dung is applied to the plant at the right time. The best guano comes from an island on the coast of Somaliland, for which the British authorities have given a concession. A second kind of guano is found on islands near Bīr ʿAlī, to the west of Makalla, and near Aden. The entire harvest of tobacco is exported to Egypt, and from there a part of it goes to Syria and to the countries on the Red Sea. The Ḥumūmī tobacco is broken up and cut into wide strips, and is smoked in water-pipes. The stalks can be used at the same time and for this reason the plants are dried whole, not the leaves alone. They are then bound into large bundles an packed into oblong bales, the weight of a camel's load, that is to say 300 lbs. The price of such a bale is nowadays 120 to 130 rupees.

1/A [OF THE SULTAN AL+ GAZI BE WAZIR -- ANALYST]

24:Meulen and Wissmann T-3 (1931)1932 MM2 Hadhramaut MM2

4. A WONDERFUL RECEPTION IN THE GARDEN CITY SEḤĒL SHIBĀM.

The families of Āl Ṭuwēy and Laᶜdjam are on the best of friendly terms with the Sultan and arrange matters with him. A little later the great dark-red cars buzz through the gate and cross the *sēl*-bed in the direction of the palm-groves, called Seḥēl Shibām. Only in the last few years has the motor-car penetrated as far as Ḥaḍramaut. Sayyid Abū Bakr el-Kāf of Terīm has made this possible by the construction of motor roads. Motor-cars can, with great difficulty, be brought from the port of esh-Shiḥr to Terīm. The separate parts of the cars have to be transported on camels for a great part of the way.

From the road one can see very little of the palm-groves and the summer pavilions in their midst; high mud walls shut off the gardens from the gaze of passers-by. There is one exception to this, where the central point is formed by a new building in modern style. This is the club of the young men of Shibām; no women come here and so there is nothing to shut off. A little further on the cars turn into the gateway that gives entrance to the garden of the Āl Ṭuwēy and Laᶜdjam. This summer abode of their joint families is still uninhabited; the time for moving from town to country has only just come. There is a well behind the house, from which oxen and donkeys draw up the water, clear as crystal, though tasting somewhat bitter. All around there are banana and papaya trees, pomegranate and lemon bushes as well as date-palms. The new summer pavilion is in the depths of the garden; our host has devoted his leisure to building it. It is a product of Ḥaḍramī imagination influenced by Singapore and Java. For the outer walls chaste, simple white has been abandoned and is replaced by soft green, rose and sky-blue. The great windows are framed by coloured ornamentation. Connected with the villa is a swimming-bath with a high parapet. One has a great longing for colour in this sunny land, where it is so lacking, and this fairy palace strikes a happy note among

24:Meulen and Wissmann T-3 (1931)1932 MM2 Hadhramaut MM2

the grey-green tops of the date-palms with the unchanging yellow-brown rocks in the background. The contrast between this part of Ḥaḍramaut and the desert of burning loam and sand, which scorches up the small, dying villages, is certainly great. To our regret we are only able to make a short stay in this land of enchantment, as the Sultan expects us at the palace for the evening meal. Our hosts take us back to the town and ask the Sultan whether he is willing for us to stay with them in their garden villa for the night. Permission is given and the Sultan even promises to spend the next day with us there. We eat alone in the palace; the Sultan retires after inviting us to draw up to the dining mat and to fall to. Afterwards by moonlight we return to the garden. Tea and pomegranates are served on a terrace. The conversation, carried on in Malay, is not fatiguing; our hosts make us feel how welcome we are and how much they appreciate this break in their very monotonous existence. When we wish to bathe in the swimming-pool we are provided not only with spotlessly clean bathing-gear but also with combs and scent. The moon shines in calm, silent splendour on the dark crowns of the date-palms, the water is clear and lukewarm. We ask ourselves over and over again: "Is this real? Is this actually Ḥaḍramaut, the secluded, the fanatical, the poor?"

Sultan ᶜAlī bin Ṣalāḥ came, as arranged, on the following morning. He at once made searching inquiries as to our further plan of travel. We are here on the farthermost limits of the Qeᶜēṭī territory and naturally the question arises: "What will await us among the Āl Kathīr?" We told the Sultan that our experiences would determine our return route. We should now go first to see the famous Sayyid Abū Bakr el-Kāf in Terīm; if he approves and thinks it justifiable to take the risk, then I, at least, shall have to return by the shortest route, and that will be direct through the Ḥumūm territory to esh-Shiḥr. Sultan ᶜAlī's advice is strongly against this, the road is dangerous and Sayyid Abū Bakr has only financial influence and no governmental authority. No, we must return to Shibām,